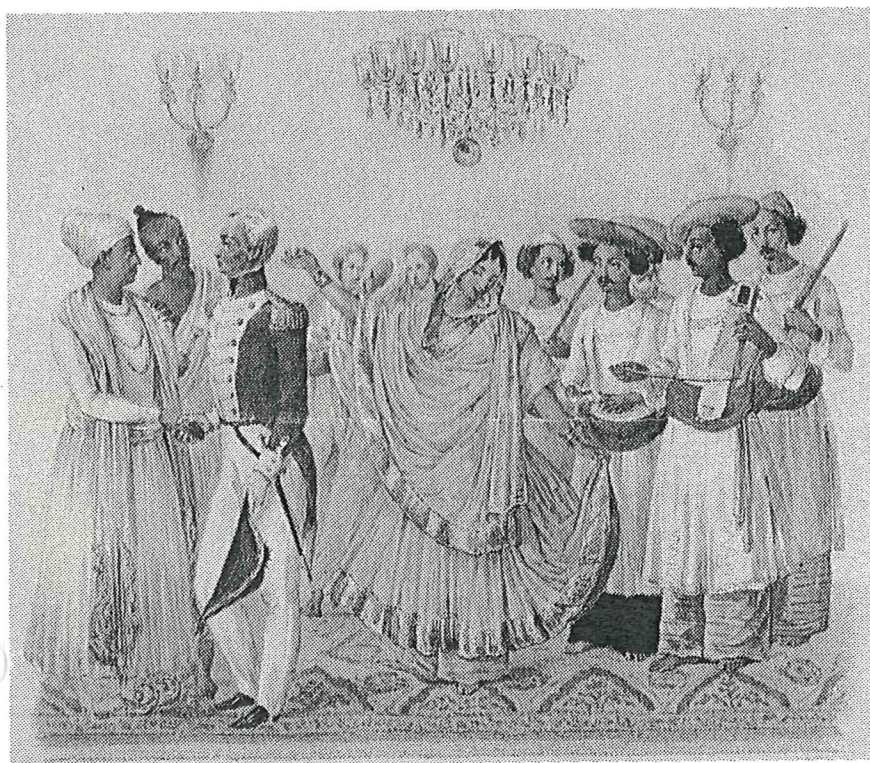


CD 2001--121

A Courtesan's Art



*A courtesan dances for guests at the house of a
Hindu Raja in Calcutta, with European guests.
Drawing by Mrs C. Belnos, c.1820*

*Thursday Noon Series
November 29, Walter Hall
Faculty of Music*

A Courtesan's Art

A lecture-performance on the subtle and seductive art of North Indian dance, by

**Prof. James Kippen &
Margaret Walker**

with guests

**Bageshree Vaze, dance
Ravi Naimpally, tabla
Anwar Khurshid, sitar**

Dance in India, from ancient temple carvings to miniature paintings to descriptions by Indian and European travellers, conquerors, and scholars, has been recognized not just for its alluring and entertaining dancing girls but also for the narrative power of its poses and gestures. Courtesans were integral to the arts in India, and carried their traditions of dance and song tenaciously from temple to court to salon and to the modern concert hall. The "classical" dance of North India blends stylistic elements from many periods of Indian history with folk and even popular genres. "Nautch" to the British, this dance was reinvented as *kathak* in the early 20th century as India revised its cultural identity on its march towards Independence. Sadly, there was no room in the new India for the courtesan.



Nautch girl of Delhi, 1920

James Kippen is an ethnomusicologist at the University of Toronto specializing in the society and culture of North India. His book *The Tabla of Lucknow: a Cultural Analysis of a Musical Tradition* (1988) is widely respected, and he has many key publications on North Indian music, including a major contribution on its rhythmic system in the *Garland Encyclopedia of World Music* (V: South Asia).

Margaret Walker is in the second year of the doctoral program in musicology/ethnomusicology. Her focus is the dance of North India, and in particular its development in the 18th and 19th centuries. She also teaches piano, and has been a member of the RCM College of Examiners since 1991.

Bageshree Vaze is from Newfoundland, and has studied several kinds of Indian classical dance including *bharata natyam* and *kuchipudi*. A recipient of the 1997 Chalmers Performing Arts Award, she traveled to New Delhi to train in *kathak* under Birju Maharaj. Her website is:

bageshree.com

Ravi Naimpally studied tabla with his uncle, the late Nikhil Ghosh of Bombay; more recently he has learnt from Anindo Chatterjee of Calcutta. He leads, and is chief composer for, the highly successful group TASA, and he is very much in demand as a teacher and performer. See

www.tasamusic.com

Anwar Khurshid learnt sitar in his native Pakistan. In Toronto he runs his own sitar school, and he has put on regular workshops with the well-known sitarist Shahid Parvez.

www.sitarschool.com

This presentation has been sponsored by the Pandit Jasraj Endowment Fund at the Faculty of Music.



Detail from a nautch scene. Lucknow, c.1780

To learn more about courtesans and the dance in North India, here are some online resources:

- torontogharana.tripod.com/kathak.html

“Lucknow Kathak Dance,” an article by James Kippen and Andréine Bel, traces the history of *kathak* as told by the family of Birju Maharaj, and introduces the reader to aspects of its aesthetic and technique.

- www.humnet.ucla.edu/echo/volume3-issue1/kippen/

“Folk Grooves and Tabla Tals,” by James Kippen, explores the metric cycles played by the tabla drums, and suggests they were influenced by the folk-inspired songs and the seductive dances of the courtesans.